CATS NEWSLETTER

The Official Journal of the Capital Area Timex/Sinclair Users Group

Presidential Ramblings

Holidays are great if you have time to enjoy them! Boy, have we been busy. It seems like everything has piled up this year. Our CATS Holiday party was a quite a success - I managed to get a great home-made fruit cake (Thanks, Sarah!). Although Joe Miller was unable to attend and bring his store of 2068 games, Ruth Fegley filled in with her 2068 and games. As a bit of nostalgia, Mark brought in a game that he had written for the TS-1000, a machine code program at that! Then he modified it on the spot to make it topical. I was impressed.

We did take care of some business also. The major item of interest was an opportunity to aquire Kodak Datashow (or equivalent) equipment at minimal cost. Sarah Fisher indicated that such units may be available from her employer - all we have to do is make the repairs needed to make them operable. We can do that, can't we?

Mannie Quintero has happily scheduled programs through June of 92. They are listed in the December 91 N/L. Oh, oh, my name is on there twice. Anyway, come to the January meeting to see how one government agency trys to have the public send in legally required reports (they can penalize you up to $25,000 per day for not complying) on floppy disks. We plan to have equipment that will project the monitor feed on the wall - come and see.

From The Editor:

While most of you were out enjoying the season, facing those crowded malls, you weren't sitting at home artfully typing up an article for the Newsletter. So, the issue is a little thin this month.

Hopefully, as you rest and recuperate from the Season and all it's parties (home and office), some of you will let your mind ponder on computers and whip up an article or two.

I would even be interested in hearing from anyone on what they would like to see in the Newsletter. On Usenet, those that only read "articles" and never post or reply are known as "Lurkers." Maybe a few "lurkers" out there will come forth and inject some interesting comments to our writings.

Enough of my standard pitch, so (as they say on the radio) here now the news.

Most important is the news that Bob Diggs is out of the hospital. Mannie Q. reports that Bob arrived home on the 22nd of December from having a valve job done (well, new heart valves really). It is reported that Bob and family are doing well.

Other news is; I have been in correspondance with Franz Herrmann of the German QL group. It seems that his group and a number of other European groups have started a clearinghouse of QL software (Intergroup Freeware Exchange -IFE),

Contents

Key Dates

11 January: CATS Meeting
        11:00 Workshop
        1:30   Executive Board Meeting
        2:00   General Meeting

22 January: Newsletter Deadline
                 For the Next Issue

8 February: CATS Meeting

Meeting Subject

Duane Parker will discuss how EPA tries to have forms sent in electronically. Duane plans on using a projector to cast an image of the monitor screen on the wall. Come and see if it works.

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similar to Quanta, but not limited to members only.

I have recieved a disk from Franz that contains a number of text files detailing what is in the collection. The three major files are :
    1 - A listing of all 1349 software packages. (8339 files and 53 Mbytes of data)
    2 - A description of 350 packages (done by hand so not all are detailed).
    3 - A listing of all contributing clubs.

I did recieve an program that looks like it should provide easy access to the listings, but I could not get it to run.

If anybody is interested in a copy of the listing files and/or two IFE Circulars, please get in touch with me.

For those that have Internet access, Giuseppe Zanetti (ftpman@alessia.dei.unipd.it) has an FTP server available with QL software. It is sabrina.dei.unipd.it (147.162.2.106). You may access it via anonymous FTP. For those interested but don't know about anon-FTP, contact your local Unix guru or contact me.

That's about all I have to report. See you at the next meeting.

Happy Hacking,

Tim

2068 Disk Utility: Superboot

By Joe Miller

PART TWO SUPERBOOT-FD68
SUPERBOOT 1 OPERATION

For users that have less than
AERCO V.9 DOS on your drive, you
will NOT be able to use SBII as
your BOOT loader program. (AERCO
CHANGED THE ROM CALL ADDRESSES
WHEN THE UPGRADE WAS MADE)
Boot up the computer and the
Help file will load. When the
help file ends, type "SBI.BAS",
to load SUPERBOOT I. After it
runs, press "1" to CAT the disk
in drive A. Now press "m" for
the menu. Your srceen should
show the following :
1= CAT DISK (ACTIVE DRIVE)
2=LOAD/RUN file listed
3=LOAD/STOP FILE LISTED
4=ERASE file listed
5=SINGLE filecopy
6=DISKCOPY
7=PRINT CAT TO 2040
8=PRINT HEADER INFO
9=FORNAT DISK (active drive)
0=SAVE SUPERBOOT(to active
drive)
These are your options. (note
until disk is cat'd using option
#1, only options #1,9 and #0
will be displayed and work)
After disk is cat'd, you may
scroll thru each entry by
pressing the space bar. Entering
"L" will load and run the file
that is highlighted. All the
other features are self
explanatory. Pressing "D" will
change the active drive.

Reset the computer and load
" INDEX III.BAS". The menu
selection will appear as
follows:
1=TRANSFER ANOTHER DISK
2=DISPLAY DIRECTORIES TRANSFERED
3=SAVE DIRECTORIES TRANSFERED
4=START A NEW FILE
5=CONTINUE OLD FILE
6=CALL TASWORD
7=GO TO BASIC
Initialize the program by
chooseing option #4 or #5. You
will be prompted and asked if

you would like single or double
column tasword listing. Index
III allow you to CAT disks until
the file is full. Use option #1
to transfer disk directories to
file. If you want to see what
has been transfered, use option
#2. Option #3 will save your
file as a tasword II compatible
file. Option #6 will call
TASWORD (BUT) you must first
configure INDEX III and resave
it. Print out the help file for
this one. After attempting to
load SBII, I found my AERCO
interface had the wrong EPROM. I
will order the VERSION #9 EPROM
and report on SUPERBOOT II at a
later date. As shown SUPERBOOT
will extend the usefulness of
the AERCO FD68 DISC SYSTEM.
AGAIN, thanks to Matt Mathieson,
Jack Dohany and John Kuhn for
superboot. JOE

IBM to QL

By Tim Swenson

As a few people in the group
know, I have recently picked up an
MS-DOS laptop. Being Pen-Based,
it's a neat little toy to play with.
I've been thinking about using it
more because it's so portable, but I
wanted a way to get text files from
it to the QL.

Disks are out because the laptop
uses 3.5" and my QL only has 5.25".
The next idea was transfering the
data via the serial port. So I
decided to give it a try.

Not wanting to spend hours
thinking about how the two serial
ports were connected and figuring
out way to get them to talk, I
borrowed some cabling supplies
(gender changes, null modems, etc)
from work to see what would work.
Then I would go out an buy only what
I needed.

As it turns out, it did not take
much. Logic told me that I should
use ser2 because it is DCE (like a

modem) where as the laptop is DTE (a computer). But, my printer cable is right next to where I set up the laptop, I so thought I would give ser1 a try (even if I did need a null modem cable).

My plan was to hook up the two computers, have the QL send all input from ser1 to the screen (scr), and then have the laptop send a file. If I saw the file on the screen, it worked. I only wanted to use MS-DOS and QDOS commands. I did not want to have to load up communication programs on both sides.

After only a few tries, I got it to work. Not being a great MS-DOS guru, I could only get the laptop to QL transfer to work. Every time I tried to send a file to the laptop I

would get read error on the serial port. If I found out how to get the QL to laptop working, I'll write another article.

Here are the specs:
Parts:
The laptop had a 9 pin serial port, so I first needed a 9-25 pin converter.
A female-female gender changer.
Instructions:
Plug the 9-25 pin converter in the laptop, plug the gender changer into that, and then plug in the printer cable (as if the laptop was the printer).
On the QL enter "baud 9600".
On the laptop enter "mode com2:96,n,8,1,p". Use either com1 or com2 depending which one you have the cable hooked up to.
On the QL enter "copy ser1 to file_name", where file_name is the name of the file you are transfering (including device name).
On the laptop enter "copy file.name com2" (or com1).
When the IBM comes back with a prompt, the file transfer is done. Hit CTRL-SPACE on the QL to stop it.

With the baud rate set a 9600, you are transfering at the fastest rate possible on both sides. The P option in the MODE command, you are telling the laptop to only send data when the QL says that it is ready.

This transfer should work with binary files as well as text files, but I have not verified this.

For me this is the simplest way to get data from the laptop to the QL. Ideally I would like to have one of the computers act as a server and be able to do all the transfers from one machine. But I have not found the time to work on a program like that (even though I have been thinking about it).

Ramsey Elec. - A Review
By Mark Fisher

Ramsey Electronics Inc.
793 Canning Way
Victor, NY 14564
Phone (716) 924-4560

Electronics - ask most youngsters today what that means and you will get a description of a small black plastic device, usually made in Japan. The attitude is passive - the emphasis on getting the SAME black box their friends have.

Modern "electronics" stores (Radio Shack) have condensed and hidden their component displays, making room for yet more expensive black boxes.

For many CATS members, "electronics" means something else - a mutable, fixable haywire that can do anything you ask of it, from ham radio to computers. What's the difference in these two views? One difference is approachable "starter" kits for kids (and others).

Ramsey Electronics Inc. offers a line of just such kits. Following in the now vacant footsteps of Radio Shack, Knight-kit and Heathkit Ramsey offers a comprehensive range of electronic project kits, 50% of which cost between $25.00 and $30.00.

Comprehensive? how about a range that stretches from a siren kit @ $3.95 to a range of ham recievers and transmitters for $29.95 to a

radar gun kit @ $89.95 to a lab grade signal generator for $2495.00.

Let's cover some specifics. The catalog is generally organized from large to small, and starts off with a communications service monitor and signal synthesizer, both costing over $2000. A giant step down in price, the next items are several preassembled frenquency counters, from $140 to $250. Next comes the FM, QRP and shortwave recievers and transmitters, all for $25 to $30 each. Next comes the grab-bag section. There's a packet kit ($60), and all sorts of electronic gizzies. FM stereo and television transmitters, radar speed guns (how fast are the COPS going?), speech scramblers, and more.

Finally there are the mini-kits - generally under $10, such as a voice activated switch, siren circuits, and a "tickle-stik" that you'll really get a kick out of - if you pick it up, that is (a pulsing 80 volt output from a 9 volt battery - ho, ho ho.)

Ramsey is aware of the needs of kids and others who are just starting out - "New for the 1990's" the manuals have been rewritten to explain the operation of the device as well as its assembly. You can send for manuals for the larger kits, and they're willing to do quantity discounts (CATS?) for schools and clubs.

I'm a total radio illiterate - it may be that the transmitter kits they offer really aren't worth the money - but the kits that I know something about seem to offer good value. I'm thinking of getting their active antenna kit to juice up my SW reception. Now, if we could just get them to offer a QL kit.

End Of (the) Line
By Tim Swenson

In working with a couple of different types of computers, I have run across a problem in transfering text data from system to system; the End-Of-Line (EOL) marker.

The world is divided into two conventions when it comes to EOL markers. Those that use New Line (NL) and those that use NewLine and Carriage Return (CR).

Unix and the QL only use a NL to distinguish the end of a line. While MS-DOS uses NL CR.

This is all fine and dandy until you have to transfer files from one system to the other. On the QL, an MS-DOS text file will show the CR character as a grey block at the end of each line. Where as a QL file will seem to print off the screen when displayed on an MS-DOS system.

By definition a New Line means to bring the cursor position down one line. A Carriage Return means to bring the cursor to the full left position. So in the old days of Teletypes, an EOL was a CR NL. I guess on modern computer systems they decided to save space by only using one character instead of two.

The QL seems to do some funny things with how it decides what constitutes an EOL. You can take a Quill list file (.lst) and copy it to the printer and it will print fine. In this file are NL's and CR's as EOL markers. A printer really needs both to print well.

You can also copy to the printer a straight QL text file without CR's and just NL's. It seems that the device driver for the serial ports knows that a plain NL should be translated to a NL/CR for the printer.

I've seen something interesting when downloading a text file for the Newsletter from the BBS. It seems

that the file only had CR's and no NL's to determine EOL. When the file was downloading all I could see is one line of text being being written. I thought that the file would be useless on the QL without NL's.

The QL realised that there were only CR's and replaced them with NL's (I doubt that QCode did it). The file looked file when I pulled it into an editor.

The QL seems to do well when it comes to this conflict, but other systems fair worse. The Kaypro that the BBS uses, needs both CR and NL for EOL.

If you upload a QL text file to the BBS with Xmodem (or any other binary transfer protocall), the BBS will only see the NL and no CR. The communications software, in text mode, will translate the local EOL marker into the EOL marker expected by the BBS (NL/CR). When you try to download the file, only NL's will be sent.

Sounds OK? But, your communication software is expecting a NL/CR for EOL not just NL, so it does not give the QL an EOL marker. The file will look funny on the QL side.

For the QL, it is simplest to send and recieve text data via a text transfer and not a binary one, like Xmodem or Kermit.

I have actually done some more with the CATS disk cataloging program. My version captures data from each file on the disk as one of the fields that finally goes into the Archive database. Since each file is opened and part of it is read, this feature greatly slows this SuperBASIC program down. Therefore, I planned to compile the program by using TURBO. What a mess! On my first trial I got 15 errors and 37 warnings, even though the SuperBASIC program did run and do the job! Most of the errors were simple things, but one error required a lot of trial and error to find. It finally turned out that the FOPEN function would not compile if it referred to a console channel, that is: ch = FOPEN(scr_512x256a0x0). (FOPEN is a Toolkit 2 function that opens a file and assigns it the next channel no., or returns a negative number if an error occurs.) Finally, I managed to eliminate the errors, and although a lot of warnings remained, it finally would compile. Anyway, if I did everything right, it even would run – really fast too – , but it did not capture the file data! After more troubleshooting, I finally found that TURBO would not properly compile TK2's BGET command – the command just doesn't do what it is supposed do even though it does something. To fix it I used one of TURBO Toolkit commands. Partial success, at last – it worked! See me if you would like to try it. Now if I can just fix those bugs that remain. Digital Precision strikes again!
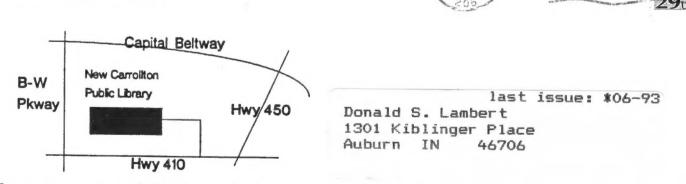
CATS Newsletter
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Capital Beltway

B-W Pkway

New Carrollton Public Library

Hwy 450

Hwy 410

The next meeting of CATS will be held on: January 11, 1991

11:00 AM Hardware Workshop
2:00 PM General Meeting

At: New Carrollton Public Library 7414 Riverdale Road (Hwy 410), New Carrollton, MD

IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OF CATS. THIS IS THE ONLY ISSUE YOU WILL RECEIVE